

VZCZCXRO6428  
PP RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHEK #0486/01 1151248  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 251248Z APR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9455  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2118  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0207  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0219  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0698  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0507  
RUEHKD/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0214  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0375  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2513  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1896  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000486

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OPPOSITION RUNNING SCARED AND CHANGING TACTICS

REF: A. BISHKEK 480  
[¶](#)B. BISHKEK 454  
[¶](#)C. BISHKEK 451

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Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: While Bishkek seems calm since the anti-government demonstration ended last week, the underlying problems between the government and opposition have not been resolved, but just postponed for another day. Opposition leaders fear that President Bakiyev and his closest advisors believe they have "won," and will act to press their advantage by harassing and further dividing the opposition. One opposition leader told us she had been threatened during interrogation by the state security service. Opposition MP Temir Sariyev believes that the opposition must change tactics to focus first on constitutional change and creating a coalition government, and only then on early presidential elections, but is unsure whether Bakiyev is willing to negotiate with the opposition.

Problems Postponed

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[¶](#)2. (C) There is a consensus in Bishkek that the quick end to the opposition's street demonstration last week lowered the tension level but did nothing to resolve the underlying problems. Rather, once again, the conflict between President Bakiyev and the opposition has been postponed to another day, and unless there is progress on constitutional and other reforms, demonstrations are likely again in the fall. Some see this latest episode as another example of one side pressing the advantage for a short-term, tactical victory,

with little regard to the long-term consequences. Former Foreign Minister Muratbek Imanaliyev attributed this failure of both sides to address problems to the lack of a developed political class in the country.

Harass and Divide

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¶ 13. (C) Opposition leader Cholpon Jakupova told us that the state security service (GKNB) had questioned her about her role in the demonstrations. Even though she was accompanied by a team of lawyers (and she is a lawyer herself), she claims that the GKNB officers told her that they did not care about the law and threatened to kill her. Jakupova, clearly shaken by the incident, said she thought the Bakiyev administration was trying to consolidate power because "they think they've won," and the government was operating without limits. She said the administration had succeeded in its strategy of dividing the opposition and civil society. Jakupova claimed that the administration had gone so far as to buy off opposition leaders Roza Otunbayeva and Edil Baisalov, with opposition MP Omurbek Babanov acting as the money man. (COMMENT: We think this unlikely. While both Otunbayeva and Baisalov opposed the demonstration and said to us that the opposition should "deal with" Bakiyev, the elected president, we think their views were likely shaped by pragmatism, not money. END COMMENT.)

An Opportunity

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¶ 14. (C) Others, however, see an opportunity. Chairman of the State Commission on Human Rights Tursunbek Akun told the Ambassador that with recent changes in the government, "things were getting better." Akun, who has been critical of

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the government in the past, said that new Prime Minister Atambayev and presidential chief of staff Sadyrkulov were listening to concerns about human rights.

Sariyev: Changing Tactics

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¶ 15. (C) In a meeting April 25 with Ambassador, opposition MP Temir Sariyev blamed Kulov for the failure of the demonstrations. Kulov, he said, had made the mistake of demanding Bakiyev's resignation and early elections without renouncing his own intention to run for president. Sariyev said that because demonstrations alone would not move the leadership to implement reforms, a more systematic "process of change" was needed. Sariyev said that the opposition would now focus first on more realistic goals, such as constitutional reform and creating a true coalition government, and once that was in place, they would push for early presidential elections. Sariyev said that the opposition was willing to forgo demonstrations if the government negotiated on these points.

¶ 16. (C) Clearly in a less abrasive mood than during his April 18 meeting with SCA DAS Evan Feigenbaum (Ref C), Sariyev thanked the U.S. for issuing the April 20 statement. He noted that shortly before the demonstrators were dispersed, negotiations on constitutional reform had concluded. Presidential chief of staff Medet Sadyrkulov, PM Almaz Atambayev, and Sariyev agreed on a text, but did not know whether the agreement would be adhered to. Sariyev thought there should be further negotiations between the opposition and government in order to head off another crisis, but was not sure whether the president would be willing to do so.

¶ 17. (C) Sariyev said he had asked Atambayev to do two things: stop the harassment of the opposition and move forward on reform. Sariyev thought that Atambayev did not have enough influence to stop the harassment, but had some hope that constitutional reform would proceed. "The old Soviet system

is back again," said Sariyev, implying that all substantive decisions continue to be made only at the top. That was why harassment against the opposition continued, and that was why "our Western partners" needed to speak out against the president's actions, added Sariyev. He warned that if Bakiyev continued to persecute his opponents, create further divisions between the north and south, and listen only to members of his family, the result could be a civil war.

Comment

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¶8. (C) Government officials, including Prime Minister Atambayev and State Secretary Madumarov, have defended the police action to end the protest last week and promised there would be no harassment of the opposition. However, three opposition members remain in detention, and we are concerned about the reports of harassment and threats to the safety of other opposition figures. We will continue to raise our concerns with government ministers and officials. Parliamentary by-elections set for April 29 seem to be a sideshow right now, but the tensions in Kemin over Bermet Akayeva's candidacy (supporters blocking a road, surrounding a court, see Ref A) bear watching as a possible sign of wider discontent in the north.

YOVANOVITCH